Margie (Miller Greene) Guillory

1) How did you first hear about the Berkeley student co-ops (USCA)?
Were you an incoming freshman or already a Cal student?
If the latter, had you lived in UC dorms?

I have a twin brother, Ron. Mom said they couldn't afford to send both of us to Berkeley at the same time. She said Ron would go since he was a boy and would eventually have to support a family, and I would probably just get married. I protested because I was a better student and was eager to go to Berkeley like our dad. Mom suggested living at home attending City College of SF to start and waiting for BART to open to commute the final two years. I started researching…

I was introduced to the BSC (USCA then) by Joe DeCuir. We met at the Lair of the Bear, the UC alumni camp in our teens. I met Joe at Ridge Project which had just opened a year or two before and accompanied him to his physics classes, Top Dog and then to Central Office where I picked up an application. Joe was at my house when my contract for Hoyt Hall arrived in the mail. [Joe eventually went on to get his engineering degrees and helped invent the Atari gaming system, Pong and later headed up Microsoft's modem division.]

Ron was accepted at Ridge House. Our parents were happy that they could afford the co-op for two of us which was the same cost as a dorm for one of us. I was happy to live at Hoyt and happier that I didn't live at home and commute to Berkeley like my dad did. BART finally opened after I got my BA.

2) What factors played a part in your decision to move into the co-op?
Had you heard about BSC (USCA) from others on campus?

The BSC always used word-of-mouth advertising. It was considered "prestigious" to live at a co-op house because you were considered more mature and responsible than if you lived in a dorm.

3) Which BSC unit(s) did you reside in? And what years did you call the co-ops home?

Hoyt Hall 1970-1972, Northside Co-op 1972-1980, CO as an employee 1972-2013

4) What did you think of the co-op after your first few months there?
Did you feel accepted as a newcomer? What first impressions were positive ones and which were negative?

My mom was somewhat horrified at the level of chaos and dirt. She immediately went to work making curtains for my brother's co-op room, and her curtain making continued in every co-op room he lived in through grad school when he lived at Rochdale. My dad thought it was awesome, fun and loved the characters living at

our co-op houses. He nicknamed one of Ron's housemates "Prince Valiant" because of his haircut. My roommate was nicknamed "Miss Vicki" after Tiny Tim's wife. I still see Miss Vicki and will attend her 50th wedding anniversary in early 2025. She's been a regular donor and supporter of BSC.

You always remember your first two weeks and your last two weeks living in a co-op house. Because Vicki and I moved into Hoyt in Spring 1970 (San Francisco had mid-year high school graduates), most of the house had well-established workshifts and traditions. The house was definitely diverse with women from all ethnicities and backgrounds. I loved how everyone was so welcoming and housemates would take us to sign up for classes (there were no computers then and we had to stand in lines, as early as 6 am for PE classes), show us how to properly wash dishes (no automatic dishwashers) and how to spot other USCA members on campus (they would be carrying lunch bags printed with the Student Co-op logo).

5) Did you participate in house governance? If so, how? What were your workshifts/and or manager/student leadership position(s)? What do you most remember about your workshifts?

I remembered how I didn't like washing dinner dishes for 60 people. I saw that Hoyt received 4 hours/week of maintenance workshifts from Cloyne Court (all men's co-op) in exchange for 13 hours/week of waitressing shifts from Hoyt. It was unfair! There were so many things broken around the house, I asked the Cloyne Maintenance Manager if I could join his crew and asked the Hoyt Workshift Manager if I could do my 5 hours/week on maintenance at Hoyt instead of my other shifts. Both agreed and I soon learned how to remove steam radiators and reseat valves, rekey doors, replace and glaze windows, fix leaky faucets and running toilets. Hoyt soon created a Maintenance Manager position for me and gave me ½ room and board to start.

6) Did you take part in any central level activities? If so, how and what are your most vivid memories of that activity?

I didn't really participate in CL activities but did attend board meetings regularly with other Hoyt members to find out what was going on in the rest of the USCA.

7) What did you think of your co-op experience when you moved out?

There's a lot of history missing here that I'll have to talk about. I met Gordon Greene, maintenance manager at Oxford Hall, who was heading up USCA's Summer Maintenance Crew in 1971. I applied to work on that summer crew because it paid 25 cents/hour more than working as a clerk at CO. We married in 1975 and lived at NSC till he graduated. When we moved into our first house, our neighbors were amazed at how we worked out the division of family duties and chores. We have the USCA's workshift system mentality to thank for that.

8) If you were asked to advise a student coming to UC now, how

would you describe the co-op as a place to live?

--You will lose track of your friends from elementary, middle and high school but your co-op friends will be friends for life.

--It's OK. You won't notice the dirt after two weeks.

9) Looking back from today—what memories of the co-op—good or bad -stand out for you?

The deep connections I made with people and the ability to reconnect as if no time has passed has been the best memory.

10) Is there a house or apartment building you feel most affiliated with? (can share more than one)

Hoyt (some of the same light fixtures I installed are still there), NSC (the picnic table I made is still on the deck) and CO (the desk I assembled from a gazillion parts and no glue is still there)

11) How did your time in the BSC impact your personal life, education, or career?

It solidified my raison d'etre to work for world peace through cooperative economics -- If everyone had what they considered "enough", there would be no conflicts or wars. Enough would be determined by each person. There would be no greed or want.

12) What and how did something you learned from your time living, doing workshifts, and/or participating in self-government in the student co-ops help prepare you for your life after college, either in your career/workplace or on a personal level?

I continued to work for USCA in different capacities for 40+ years. It seemed whatever project I vehemently opposed was the project I was asked to implement. I disagreed with decentralizing the houses because I thought it was an inefficient system. So, I was given the job of Decentralization Clerk to set that up. I disagreed with converting Central Kitchen to CFS/Central Warehouse for the same reason. I was given that job even though I knew nothing about food delivery systems or cooking or running the largest institutional kitchen in the East Bay serving 6,000 meals a day including Meals-on-Wheels, church groups, senior centers and all the co-op houses three times a day. I converted USCA's accounting and bookkeeping

systems at least 5 times including the first conversion from pen and paper to computer.

13) How would you describe the BSC's impact on the broader Berkeley community (or world!)?

I think BSC sent a lot of innovative, entrepreneurial people out into the world. Members learned a lot more living at BSC than they ever did in the classroom. There are so many famous alumni—Norm Mineta, Terrence Hallinan, Dr. Hip, Gordon Moore, Alice Medrich, Margot Adler to name a very few. There have been at least two MacArthur award winners that I know of. Most BSC movers and shakers fly under the radar.

14) Think back about your non-co-op friends—why did they not come to the co-op?

They hadn't a clue. My 2nd husband was an "outsider" and never understood the co-op ethos.

15) What do you think the co-ops of today could do to be a better and more attractive
choice for incoming students?

Learn the history of the cooperative movement, become involved more in house, BSC and NASCO activities. Learn cooperation in supporting one another.

16) If you are a member of the BSC Alumni Association, do you have any thoughts about
their activities and what the BSCAA should do differently—if anything?

Be more active with BSC activities? Have more BSC/BSCAA activities? Picnics? BSC used to have a welcome BBQ at the Strawberry Canyon Pool. House Managers brought all the new members and it was considered the best food served that quarter.

17) Would you be willing to have the BSCAA interview you via video (or audio) for a fuller discussion? (There is also the option to send in a video/audio recording of your interview)

I think that's where we're headed…